

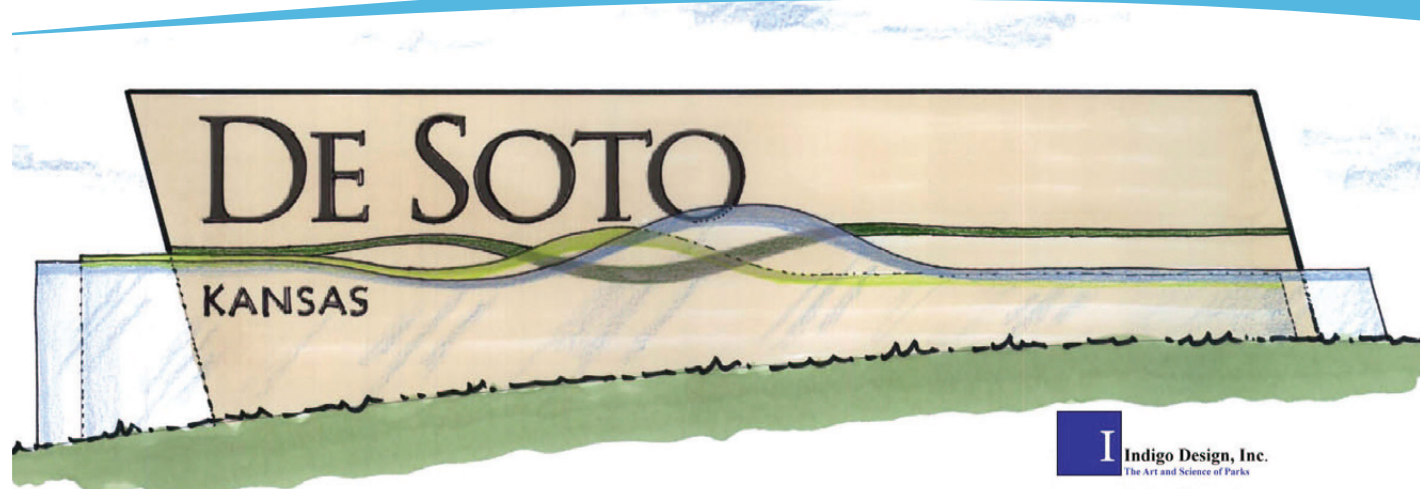
DE SOTO

KANSAS

MONUMENT FOR DE SOTO

This fall the City is moving forward with a project to construct a monument sign along K-10 highway intended to showcase our new logo and welcome visitors into the community. A budget of \$80,000 has been included the City's Capital Improvement Plan for a number of years but implementation has been delayed while the new logo was being finalized. A sign committee worked for several months to develop our new logo, which the City Council adopted. That same sign committee is now developing recommendations to the City Council about the graphical design, sizing, and location for the monument sign.

The City retained Indigo Design of De Soto to assist in the sign design concept. On June 2nd, Indigo Design's Doug Pickert presented the recommended sign concept to the Council. Although not finalized at this time, the concept presented to the Council includes a forward leaning cast stone panel roughly 25 feet in length and 6 feet high with the logo's lettering cast into the panel. Surrounding the panel are two transparent plexiglass offsets that will hold the colored waves that form the City Logo. The sign will



be lit from the bottom; LED lighting will accent the colored waves on the plexiglass panels. The sign will be two-sided and will be placed perpendicular to the highway.

Much consideration has been given to the sign's proposed location. Obviously the sign must be clearly visible from both west bound and east bound K-10 traffic, and it needs to be at a location that marks an entrance to our community. The scale of the sign is also a critical factor

in choosing a proper location. For safety reasons, the sign must be set off from the roadway a considerable distance. The sign must therefore be of sufficient size to be effective. The location recommend by the Committee is within the K-10 right-of-way along the north side of the highway approximately ¼ mile east of the Lexington Avenue interchange. The sign will be placed approximately 100 feet north of the outside shoulder of the west-bound

lanes. This location is slightly higher than the highway and clearly visible from both directions of travel.

We are hopeful that the sign will be in place by the end of the year. The City is currently working to finalize the concept design, to refine project cost estimates to ensure that the project is within funding levels, and to obtain the necessary permits from KDOT.

IN THIS ISSUE



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4 City Receives Praise from financial watch-dogs.

7 New rights-of-way policies clear up confusion and address safety.

RIDDLE....

HOW DO TAXES GO DOWN & UP AT SAME TIME?

Budget adoption was scheduled for August 19, beyond the deadline for this newsletter. This article reflects final numbers from City Council budget workshop; numbers are subject to any final changes that may have been made at August 19 City Council meeting.

Here's a riddle for you...when do your property taxes actually go down when the tax levy actually goes up? That's an interesting ponderable which is actually the case that will be encountered by De Soto property tax payers in 2011. The City's municipal tax bill will show a levy of 20.10 mills, which is actually higher than the current 2010 tax levy of 19.270 mills. However, the end result for the average homeowner in De Soto will be a tax bill that is lower in 2011 than it was in 2010. Confused?

Here's the explanation: the answer lies in how the State of Kansas values your home and all other properties for property tax purposes. There are three general categories of properties that pay property taxes and are thus given an "assessed value."

The first category is REAL ESTATE. All land and buildings--which includes houses, commercial/industrial buildings, vacant lots, farm homesites--make up this first category.

The second category is PERSONAL PROPERTY. This includes all machinery and equipment used by factories and businesses to conduct their operations. The Kansas legislature eliminated any property taxes on such equipment purchased after June 30, 2006. Because Kansas depreciates the remaining taxable equipment, the end result is that taxable equipment and Personal Property as a category contribute less and less to the City's overall assessed valuation.

All properties in the Real Estate and Personal Property categories have their taxable value examined

and established every year by the County Appraiser. In Johnson County, that is County Appraiser Paul Welcome's responsibility. His duties require him to try to place a "market value" on all such property. Market value is the value that you would expect to sell such property if you put it on the market. Obviously, market value has become a fluctuating target for the last couple of years. Mr. Welcome's job has become a very tough one.

The third category that makes up our "assessed value" is STATE ASSESSED property. State Assessed property includes properties owned by public utilities and railroads. The County Appraiser has no responsibility for this property. The State of Kansas has the duty to place a taxable value on all such property within De Soto and the rest of Kansas' communities.

DE SOTO ASSESSED VALUATION CHANGES FROM 2010 TO 2011				
	\$ 2,010	\$ 2,011	Change 2010 to 2011	Change 2010 to 2011
Real Estate	\$ 48,020,807	\$ 45,440,172	\$(2,580,635)	-5.4%
Personal Property	\$ 4,664,429	\$ 4,639,631	\$(24,798)	-0.5%
State Assessed	\$ 2,163,184	\$ 2,790,383	\$ 627,199	29.0%
Total	\$ 54,848,420	\$ 52,870,186	\$(1,978,234)	-3.6%

So when you add up all of the categories of our De Soto assessed values for the 2010 and 2011 budgets, the total comes out as depicted in the chart below.

You've read this article to this point without discovering the answer to the riddle about how your taxes are going down when the tax levy is going up. Hang in there; we're getting closer.

As you can see from the assessed valuation spreadsheet above, Real Estate values (as a general statement for the whole community) decreased in taxable value from 2010 going into 2011. They decreased, on average, -5.4%. Remember that the Real Estate category includes both houses and commercial/industrial/farm property. The County assessor tells us that

the average value for a De Soto home for 2010 is \$193,834. The value for that same average De Soto home going into the 2011 budget year decreased -4.5% to \$185,221.

Finally, here's the answer to the riddle. In 2010, the average De Soto homeowner with a house valued at \$193,834 paid a 19.270 mill tax bill to the City of

TAX BILL FOR AVERAGE DE SOTO HOME OWNER		
	City Tax Bill	Increase (Decrease) in 2011 Tax Bill
2010 City tax bill @ 19.27 mills	\$ 430	
2011 City tax bill @ 20.10 mills	\$ 428	\$(2)

2010 De Soto Home Avg appraised Value
2011 De Soto Home Avg Appraised Value

De Soto for a total of \$430. For 2011, the County Appraiser determined that the same homeowner's house value slipped to \$185,221. If you apply the 2011 De Soto mill levy of 20.10 to that home, the tax bill totals \$428, an actual decrease of \$2 compared to 2010.

You say that your house is not the average De Soto house; the County Appraiser's notice that you received in March shows that your house is worth more or less than the De Soto average? Here's the key to determine if your City tax bill for 2011 is going down or not. Compare your 2009 and 2010 appraised values (both numbers are on your County notice). If your appraised value went down by at least -4.2%, your City tax bill will not go up. If your appraised value decreased even more, your tax bill will also go down more.

The brunt of any tax bill increase will be felt by the State Assessed categories and not homeowners and commercial/industrial properties. Referring again to the spreadsheet that summarizes assessed valuation changes, you can see that the public utilities and railroads, which make up the State Assessed category, are going up significantly.

CITY CONTACTS & HELPFUL NUMBERS

MAYOR

David R. Anderson
913-583-3362 Home
816-985-0342 Cell

CITY ADMINISTRATOR

Pat Guilfoyle
913-583-1182 x 120
913-689-8740 Cell

CITY CLERK

Lana McPherson
913-583-1182 x 110
913-689-8733 Cell

CITY BUILDING OFFICIAL

Steve Chick, Sr.
913-583-1182 x 130
913-208-4526 Cell

CITY CODES OFFICER

Pam Graff
913-583-1182 x 114
913-238-0435 Cell

CITY ENGINEER

Mike Brungardt, P.E.
913-583-1182 x 116
913-689-8737 Cell

CITY PLANNER

Linda Bohnsack
913-583-1182 x 115

STREET SUPERINTENDENT

Ron Creason
913-583-1182 x 126
913-238-0437 Cell

CITY SHOP

913-583-3379

UTILITIES

Nancy Steele
913-583-1182 x 112

WASTEWATER SUPERINTENDENT

Doug Smith
913-238-0434 Cell
Wastewater Plant
913-585-9956

WATER SUPERINTENDENT

Clarence Brunk
913-583-1182 x 119
913-238-0436 Cell

Water Plant
913-583-1749

CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Mitra M. Templin
913-583-3183

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Betty Cannon
913-583-1500

Mike Drennon
913-583-1389

Ron McDaniel
913-585-1902

Rick Walker
913-538-5655

MUNICIPAL COURT CLERK

Boots Linden
913-583-1182 x 122

PARK & RECREATION DIRECTOR

Jay Garvin
913-583-1182 x 127
913-544-8073 Cell

AQUATICS MANAGER

Justin Huslig
913-583-1182 x 131
913-620-6629 Cell

ANIMAL CONTROL

Jo. Co. Sheriff
913-782-0720

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Sara Ritter
913-583-1585
913-238-2206 Cell

JOHNSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT.

Dispatch
913-782-0720

NORTHWEST JOHNSON COUNTY CONS. FIRE DISTRICT - SERVING DE SOTO

De Soto Station
913-583-1595

NW Jo Co Station
913-583-3886

WELDON-HONEY CREEK SANITATION (Trash Service)

Kevin Weldon
785-423-8999 cell

Randy Weldon
785-423-1809 cell

OTHER HELPFUL NUMBERS

Cable-Time Warner
913-451-6464

DigSafe Kansas
1-800-344-7233

Electricity-Westar Energy
1-800-383-1183

Fire Dept. De Soto Station
913-583-1595

Natural Gas-Atmos Energy
1-888-442-1313

Post Office De Soto Branch
913-583-1543

Schools USD #232
913-667-6200

Senior Center De Soto Branch
913-585-1762

Johnson Co. Courthouse
913-715-5000

Johnson Co. Election Office
913-782-3441

Johnson Co. Environmental
913-492-0402

Johnson Co. Hazardous Waste
913-715-6900

Johnson Co. Library-De Soto
913-583-3106

Johnson Co. Motor Vehicle
913-826-1800

Johnson Co. Multi-Service Ctr
913-583-1152

Johnson Co. Sheriff Dispatch
913-782-0720

De Soto City Council meets the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber.

De Soto Planning Commission meets the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber.

De Soto Municipal Court is held the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber.



www.desotoks.us
Check us out on Facebook!

CHECK WITH CHICK... YOUR BUILDING OFFICIAL

I would like to take this opportunity to cover with you a topic we hear a lot about today, green building construction and energy efficiency. Remember, I am always available should you have a question or want me to cover a special topic of interest to you. You can contact me, Building Official Steve Chick Sr. at 913-583-1182, ext. 130 Or schick@desotoks.us.

Green building construction and energy efficiency—two construction trends often misused and misunderstood. Several organizations are working on writing green, sustainable or high performance codes, two of the more notable ones include the National Board of Building Sciences, which created the Whole Building Design Guide and the US Green Building Councils, which created the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for New Construction (Leed-NC). However, no one can currently define the term “Green Building” as there is no common legally-enforceable Green Building Code. The International Code Council and The National Association of Home Builders have published a National Green Building Standard, which is their initial step towards developing a Green Building Code.

Enough about the code issues--whether you're building a house from scratch or looking to increase the energy efficiency of your home, there

are a number of things you can do to make your home more sustainable and green. Buildings have an enormous impact on our environment with their designs, construction and operation. Buildings account for more than 40 percent of the United States' energy used and resulting pollution.

We currently have the opportunity to use materials and products in our homes that are environmentally friendly. Building green doesn't mean your home has to be more expensive or that you need to use alternate materials; you can often reduce your overall expenses by using traditional methods in efficient and environmental ways.

- Use materials that are easily recyclable, reusable, renewable, durable, affordable and low maintenance.
- Maximize insulation--weather strip door and window openings and seal ducts.
- Install high-performance windows and energy-efficient appliances, and consider solar effects when locating your windows.
- Choose high-efficiency (90 percent and higher) heating and cooling equipment with a seasonal energy efficiency rating (SEER) of 14 or higher. Install programmable thermostats to minimize energy use, especially useful when nobody is home.
- Select low-consumption or dual flush toilets and low-flow lavatory, sink and shower faucets when doing replacements.
- When installing new carpets, choose those made from recycled materials and recycle your old carpet.
- Replace incandescent bulbs with fluorescent bulbs.
- Turn off unnecessary lighting fixtures, both indoors and outdoors. Install lighting timers or sensors to automatically turn off lights when not used.
- In winter, lower the thermostats a few degrees, close the blinds in

the summer and minimize cooking during the heat of the day.

While most observers agree that the “Green Building Trend” is the wave of the future the public still seems to be on a learning curve with the whole concept and process. The learning curve is certainly on the upswing with homeowners being more sensitive to energy-costs and becoming more environmentally conscious in general. Should you like to read or investigate additional information on these topics please contact me and remember to click on the Building Inspection pages on the City of De Soto website (www.desotoks.us).



▲ Rotary member Kris Johnson, Parks and Recreation Director Jay Garvin, and Rotary President Graham Gordon (left to right) reviewed the site location of the picnic area to be financed jointly by the De Soto Rotary Club and a grant from Rotary International.

HOORAY FOR DE SOTO ROTARY CLUB

The De Soto Rotary Club is stepping up to be the first donor. In the last newsletter, we talked about plans to install picnic and seating areas along the banks of the Kansas River at Riverfest Park. The idea is to provide De Soto residents an opportunity to enjoy the River setting while having a picnic or to enjoy a quiet time with their favorite book. Park visitors could simply take of

the quiet of the Park's natural setting and do some daydreaming or meditating.

The only thing lacking to make the 2 picnic and 5 scenic bench areas a reality is for sponsors to step forward and donate \$3,150 for a picnic spot or \$2,850 for a bench setting. If donors will step up with contributions, City work crews will clear the spot and transform the River bank setting into the finished product.

The Rotary Club is going to make the first picnic area a reality. The Club, which has a solid reputation for supporting all-things-De Soto, contacted the City with its commitment. If anyone else is interested in learning more and possibly becoming the second donor for this program, please contact City Administrator Patrick Guilfoyle at 913-583-1182, extension 120 or by email at pguilfoyle@desotoks.us.

DOING A GOOD JOB DE SOTO

“You’re doing a good job, De Soto.” At least, that is the message delivered by the financial watchdog Standard & Poor’s. In considering the City’s financial condition and how it manages its resources earlier this spring, S&P had this to say, “Standard & Poor’s deems De Soto’s financial management practices ‘strong’ under its Financial Management Assessment methodology, indicating practices are strong, well embedded, and likely sustainable.” De Soto takes pride in S&P’s assessment that the City’s financial management practices are “strong” because the “strong” rating is S&P’s highest possible assessment. The

City’s financial condition, at the end of 2009, contributed significantly to S&P’s sense about the City’s financial footing. As City Administrator Pat Guilfoyle points out, “Aside from our water and sewer utility, all of the City’s operating departments are financed by the General Fund. We ended 2009 with the General Fund’s largest unencumbered cash balance in its history, which followed a then-record cash balance at the end of 2008. S&P likes to see that kind of consistency when it evaluates cities.”

Guilfoyle adds that S&P has kept a close eye on De Soto over the last couple of years, resulting in increasing

confidence in the City’s financial practices. As an indication of that confidence, Guilfoyle points out that S&P raised the City’s bond rating in 2008 three entire grades, from a “BBB” rating to an “A,” a leap-frog upgrading that is uncommon. “When we went out for a bond rating this spring, we were fairly confident that the Kansas City metro area’s economy wasn’t bad enough to adversely affect our bond rating. We were optimistic that we would be able keep our ‘B+1’ bond rating,” says Guilfoyle. “But, not only did S&P confirm our existing rating in a down economic environment as we had hoped, it actually improved

our status by raising our rating to its current ‘A+’. Wow, that was especially gratifying.”

One of the reasons why cities attempt to maintain a healthy cash balance, suggests Guilfoyle, is to help them bridge troubled budgetary times such as we are experiencing in this country now, to use it as a flexible budget tool, “That healthy balance can be tapped to prevent property taxes from sky-rocketing, but, at the same time, allow us to keep a healthy cash balance available to address any unforeseen and unbudgeted spending needs that might develop during a budget year.”

LOOKING FOR FALL & WINTER ACTIVITIES? DE SOTO PARKS & RECREATION 2010/2011 FALL/WINTER ACTIVITIES

Summer is coming to a close; Labor Day is right around the corner. It’s hard to believe that we’ll soon be wrapping up in winter coats and cursing the short and cold winter days. It’s not too early to register for activities that will give you and your family an escape from the winter blues. We’re here to help you; listed below are popular activities that might interest you. We have a range of programs that will combat winter’s cabin fever, give kids and parents opportunities to burn up some calories and stay fit, and learn new skills.

For more information, you can contact us at the Recreation Department by phone at 913-583-1182 and talk to Jay at extension 127 or Justin at extension 131. You can also log on to the City’s website at www.desotoks.us and click on the Park/Recreation link.

YOUTH BASKETBALL CLINIC

- Fee: \$30.00
- Saturdays – Nov 6th-Dec 18th
- Grades: Kindergarten thru 6th Grade

YOUTH BASKETBALL LEAGUE

- Fee: \$40.00
- Registration Deadline: Friday, November 5, 2010
- League start date: Saturday, January 8, 2011

YOUTH DANCE – SESSION 2

- Approximate start date: Beginning of November

ADULT FITNESS – SESSION 2

- Approximate start date: Beginning of November



▲ Archery campers—program at Widow Big Knife Park, offered by Parks & Rec and Prairie Traditional Archers Club.

ADULT CO-ED VOLLEYBALL – SESSION 2

- Fee: \$110.00
- Approximate start date: November 1, 2010

ADULT BASKETBALL

- Fee: \$250.00
- Registration Deadline: Friday, November 12, 2010
- Game start date: Sunday, December 5, 2010

Visit www.desotoks.us for more information

WHAT'S YOUR BEEF?

SURVEY TOPIC: RIVERFEST PARK

What you see in Riverfest Park today is only Phase 1 of a 5-phase master plan. Future plans include playground facilities, restrooms, picnic shelters/pavilions, and overnight RV and camping facilities. But those future phases will not happen until the economy improves and future City Councils decide to move forward.

Phase 1 improvements have allowed for the Park to host area concerts and events for three years now, a major reason for developing the Park to begin with. There have been concerts, BBQ contests, 4th of July fireworks/picnics, and De Soto Days Festivals.

So, what do think? How can organizers of such events make their events more enjoyable for you?

You can return your response several ways. You can clip out this part of the newsletter and mail it back to us at City Hall at PO Box C, De Soto, Ks. 66018. Or, if you want to save a stamp and drop it in our nightly bill-paying drop-off at the front of City Hall, feel free to do that. And if you have a moment and want to simply drop it off at the City Hall front desk, by all means, feel free to do that.

What Kind of Concerts Would You Enjoy?		
	You Bet	No Way
Keep bringing country/western?		
Keep bringing blues?		
Keep bringing golden oldies rock-n-roll?		
How about current top 40 music?		
How about jazz?		
How about big band?		
What other types of music would bring you to the Park? (Please List)		
What Festivals/Events Would You Enjoy?		
	You Bet	No Way
Keep bringing BBQ events?		
Keep bringing 4th of July food/music events?		
How about ethnic festivals?		
How about Friday night movies/popcorn series during summer?		
How about Wine and cheese tasting events?		
Be creative, what else would bring you to the Park? (Please List)		
Have you been to any events at the Park in last 3 years? If so, which ones?		
Other Suggestions to improve upon future events?		

CITY UTILITIES SURVEY RESULTS ARE IN ... SURVEY SAYS

We asked how you felt about our utilities—water, sewer, trash, recycling, brush dump; and you answered. Well, not everyone responded. The response rate was very low, 12 responses. That is not too surprising since people had to cut and deliver their responses to City Hall, an admitted inconvenience and disincentive. Also, our distribution method for the newsletter as an insert in the newspaper reduces the number of people who probably noticed the newsletter at all.

Given the small response, the results are not reliable and valid. A 10% return rate is considered a good threshold number to validate survey results. That would mean we would need about 210 responses from the 2100 delivered.

In any event, below is a summary of the 12 responses. We also noted all the written comments below:

Curbside Recycling

- Would have to be simple—no sorting or rinsing required.
- Don't support free curbside

recycling because it would eventually lead to an added charge.

- Need a glass container at current recycling drop-off.
- Free Bulky Waste Pick-Up Service
- When is it?
- Should not be provided without an extra user charge by user.
- Landlords abuse service.
- Appliance companies pick up and remove old appliances for a small fee.
- Service is not

environmentally good.

Free Brush Dump

- Love the facility.
- Extend season into November for leaves.
- Where is it?

Trash

- Do not like big trash bins, no room to store.

Water

- Cloudy a lot
- Lose water service sometimes—not good.
- Tastes bad and is bad on skin.

MISPLACED CALLS

FREQUENT CALLS & QUESTIONS TO CITY HALL

“Mom, where are my shoes?” When we’ve been at a loss, we all turned to mom who hopefully has the answer. City Hall has its own “mom” in the person of Nancy who answers your incoming calls to City Hall.

Often, we all have questions but don’t know where to go for the answers; so “Mom Nancy” receives frequent calls wondering where the “lost shoes” are. So we asked Nancy to compile a list of the most frequently asked questions that require someone not associated with the City of De Soto to answer. Here is what she has to say—and by the way, all the numbers are 913 area code unless otherwise indicated:

“I get many calls from people needing a phone number for some of the local businesses, i.e. the Post Office, 583-1543, Dale’s Service, 585-1042, Multi-Service Center, 583-1152.

“We get a lot of inquiries about where to go for Johnson County services. The most common ones?

- Where do I renew car tags? Johnson County Motor Vehicle at 826-1800 is the phone number for all those car license and title questions. This 826-1800 number serves both the Olathe and the Mission offices.
- “I know cities handle marriage licenses in some states, but not in Kansas.” Happy couples looking to get hitched need to contact the Johnson County Court House in Olathe 913-715-3353.
- If you’re looking at those old paint cans or any hazardous chemicals and don’t know how to dispose of them? Call Johnson County Environmental at 715-6900; they will be able to give you that information.
- Got an animal control question or issue with dogs? Call Johnson County Sheriff office 782-0720. “But if you have an issue with non-domesticated critters such as skunks or possums, that is a little harder to deal with. The County

does not handle wild animals. The County’s suggestion is to contact a private company that specializes in those problems; two that we see around here a lot are Critter Control at 384-3888 and Kaw Valley Critter Control at 785-233-0966.”

“School issues are another source of “not-sure-who-to-ask” types of questions.” Best place to start with all questions about USD 232 matters is at the school administration office’s main phone number, 667-6200.

Got a gas problem?—that is, the natural type for home fuel? De Soto residents’ natural gas service is provided by Atmos Energy 888-442-1313. “Now that we’re talking about utilities, electrical service generates lots of phone calls, too.” De Soto is serviced by Westar Energy, 800-383-1183.

“I get asked about senior-related housing opportunities.” There are two communities in De Soto. There is an independent senior housing development in De Soto on 83rd Street just east of Kill Creek Rd., 585-9998. There is also an assisted living and skilled nursing facility, Hillside Village 583-1266.”

How about cable TV? Place to call is Time Warner Cable, 451-6464.

“Here is one that you may not think much about, but I get asked if there is a funeral home in De Soto. “Yes,” answers Nancy, “there is, the Cedar Crest Memorial Chapel located on Lexington Ave, 583-1002.”

“Do you know the number for the Chamber of Commerce?” is one Nancy hears often. That number is 583-1585.

“Johnson County provides many senior services; one of them, senior lunches, is served up right here in the De Soto City Hall. People can call the JoCo Senior Center at 585-1762 for more information.”

If you want to burn leaves

or brush, people want to know if they can do that. Yes, you can, with a proper burn permit. To get a burn permit, all you have to do is make arrangements through the fire department at 583-3886.

“Around election time, I get a lot of phone calls about where to register to vote?” People can do that at the Johnson County Election Office, located at 2101 E. Kansas City Rd., Olathe. The phone number is 782-3441.

Nancy understands that a lot of people don’t like the automatic answering system like we have at City Hall. “People don’t like to wait for the automatic system to go through the directory listing before they can punch a number and get through to a person; or, maybe they just don’t know who at City Hall would handle their certain issue.” Her advice? “When you call City Hall and don’t want to listen to the extension choices, just press “0”. That will ring the utility desk which is usually me.”

Then there are people who want to know what is the local sales tax rate? It is 9.275%. Of that total, 1.75% is for the City of De Soto, 6.3% is for the State of Kansas, and 1.225% is for Johnson County.

Nancy fields many questions about the trash service. And City Hall is the best place to start with your trash questions. Here are answers to the most frequently asked questions: did you know we have a bulk waste day (which is your first trash day of the month)? On that day, you can place your large items—such as couches, appliances, other furniture, you name it except for building materials, cardboard boxes and extra trash bags—out on the curb and our trash hauler will pick them up FREE. If you have extra bags of trash that won’t fit in your container you can come to City Hall and purchase bag tags for \$1.00 each. Another option for your weekly overflow



trash needs? get a second container for an additional \$3.00 per month.

If you want to recycle your cardboard, newspapers, plastics #1-7, aluminum and metal cans, we also have recycle bins located in the City Hall parking lot.

“Where can I get a large dumpster?” is another frequent trash question. Honey Creek Disposal has large roll off dumpsters that they will rent and drop off/pick-up at your location. Call them at 785-423-8999 for more details.

About this time of the year, Nancy says she “gets a lot of questions about the City’s brush site. It is open the first and third Saturday from 8 am to 12 noon, beginning the first Saturday of April and ending the third Saturday of October.”

One of the billing questions I receive is, “How does the City bill for its water bill (which also includes sewer and trash)? The City actually bills a month behind; for example, when you receive your bill in May, it is for the water used from the first of April to the first of May.”

“And if these phone numbers don’t answer your question, just call me and I’ll try to help,” says Nancy. You can reach her at 583-1182 (Remember, simply press “0” to bypass the directory to get to Nancy faster.).

NEW POLICIES FOR CITY RIGHTS-OF-WAY

This spring, the City Council appointed a committee to look into the City's policies concerning activities and improvements that take place within the City's rights-of-way. A right-of-way is a strip of property that contains the roadway and an area adjacent to the roadway that is needed to maintain the road and accommodate other utilities such as water, sewer, gas, electric and phone. In most cases, the right-of-way is owned by the City, which makes the City partly accountable for any alterations made by adjacent property owners or utility contractors.

While the City has followed some general practices relating to activities that take place in the right-of-way, we have never formalized these practices into any set policies a manner that is directly enforceable. In February a committee consisting of Council members, Planning Commissioners, residents, and City Staff was formed to compile a recommended policy for the Council's consideration. The committee held five meetings from February through May, which resulted in a comprehensive ordinance that was adopted by the Council on July 15th. Factors considered by the committee included level of service, safety, costs, enforcement, and legal liability issues. With a few exceptions, the new policy simply formalizes the practices that have been followed by the City in the past.

MOWING

In addition to mowing City-owned property such as the parks, city shop, and city hall, the City mows various areas within the right-of-way around town. Based on past practices and a review of the areas that are currently mowed by the City, we have identified the following general policy guidelines that define the City's approach to mowing:

The City mows rights of way where sight distances are limited and keeping roadside vegetation

is critical for safety reasons.

The City mows rights-of-way that would present a danger to the homeowner if he attempted to perform the maintenance. Examples include higher traffic volume roads such as 83rd Street, or areas that have very steep side slopes.

The City mows areas that lie between adjacent roads, or areas where it is not completely clear who would be considered the "adjacent" land owner.

The City mows rights of way in rural areas where the abutting properties are vacant or agricultural. The above general policy statements were not reflected in the right-of-way regulation ordinance language. The committee felt that if we were to incorporate some of the policy statements we might be accepting legal responsibilities that we otherwise do not already have. According to the policy, it is the adjacent land owner's duty to mow and maintain all areas abutting a property that is zoned commercial or industrial. The City will mow the rights-of-way abutting properties that are agricultural in nature, unless their zoning is commercial or industrial.

DRIVEWAY APPROACHES AND CULVERTS

Property owners are responsible for maintaining all driveway approaches and associated drainage culverts on their property or within the Right-of-way adjacent to their property at their own cost. However it is recognized that since these elements are technically on city property, the liabilities associated with unmaintained culverts, or poorly installed culverts, cannot be completely transferred to the land owner. The City therefore maintains a right to correct hazardous situations if they arise.

Because we are concerned with vehicular impacts, the policy disallows the construction of headwalls

surrounding driveway culverts.

The City has long had specific requirements for the installation of driveways and culverts, but have historically not assumed "ownership" of those elements, even though they are within the right-of-way. The proposed policy does not specifically state that the culverts are the property of the City, but in effect they become city property because they are within the right-of-way.

LANDSCAPING, OBSTRUCTIONS & JUNK

Under the new policy, grasses, flowers and "other vegetation" are allowed within the right-of-way as long as they do not interfere with traffic sight lines. The policy prohibits the planting of trees within the right-of-way, gives the City the right to remove an existing tree if it interferes with the maintenance, reconstruction, safety or use of the road. It also prohibits the placement of obstructions or junk within the right-of-way. There have been several locations throughout town where homeowners have placed large stones within a ditch or directly adjacent to the road that may pose a hazard to a vehicle. These applications of landscaping elements within the right-of-way are now prohibited.

MAILBOXES

The most extensive portion of the new policy relates to the construction of mailboxes. Throughout the state and country, traffic officials have long recognized the safety hazard caused by some mailboxes. Of particular concern are mailboxes that are constructed with stone, brick, or other heavy support structures. These are commonly referred to as "monument" type mailboxes, and they can be deadly if struck by a vehicle. A national standard for mailbox construction entitled "A Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways" published by the American Association of State Highway & Transportation



▲ The goal of the specific criteria to make mailboxes less hazardous in high traffic areas.

Officials (AASHTO) 1994 has been adopted by reference. This standard gives specific criteria to make mailboxes less hazardous in high traffic areas. The policy prohibits any new construction of monument type mailboxes, and treats existing monument mailboxes as "Non-conforming Structures" which are allowed to stay but cannot be replaced if they are damaged by more than 50%.

The ultimate goal of this effort is to establish a policy on activities and construction impacting the City's rights-of-way so property owners and City forces have a clear understanding of the division of duties and responsibilities. It is important to remember that the City's roads belong to all of us, and we must protect the public's investment in infrastructure and take steps to ensure public safety on the roads and thoroughfares throughout the community.

CIVIC SPIRIT ALIVE AND WELL... THANKS DAVE!

If you have visited and enjoyed the refurbished cooking grilles at Miller Park recently, you have the generosity of David Penny to thank. Parks and Recreation Department employee Doug Grier is a talented metal worker. According to Parks and Recreation Director Jay Garvin, "I thought we could take advantage of Doug's talent and save some money by having him refurbish the worn-out grilles instead of buying new ones." Jay directed Doug to check out prices on heavy-duty metal. Not only is Doug a talented metal worker, but he knows how to find a bargain, too.

Doug visited with local businessman David Penny who owns The Master's Dredging Co. here in De Soto. David demonstrated his civic spirit for De Soto and told Doug that

he could certainly supply the City with the metal, and for a good price, too... as in FREE. David even upgraded the quality of metal that Doug had planned to use which will allow the grilles to remain functional even longer.

Street Superintendent Ron Creason, upon hearing about David's generosity, related another recent experience with David Penny. Looking for big concrete blocks to be used at the City's brush dump, Ron contacted Melanie Lorenzo, who works for David at his Penny's Concrete business. Not only could they meet Ron's request, but the price for the 35 blocks proved too good to pass up...as in FREE.

It is nice to know that some things in life are still free; you just have to know who are the generous civic spirits in your community.



▲ Above, inset, grills before. Large photo above, grills after.

2011 BUDGET APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL AUGUST 19

Budget adoption was scheduled for August 19, beyond the deadline for this newsletter. This article reflects final numbers from City Council budget workshop; numbers are subject to any final changes that may have been made at August 19 City Council meeting.

You know the old saying, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." In the municipal budget-world, "When the going gets tough, you have to make some tough decisions."

The State of Kansas imposes an August 25 deadline to adopt and submit our City budget for 2011, which takes effect on January 1, 2011. In accomplishing that feat, the challenges were plentiful. Some of those challenges were unprecedented both here in our City and everywhere else in Kansas and around the country:

Assessed Valuation. Property taxes are a key part of a city's revenue base. Across the country, the real estate market has driven property values downward for the last two years. De Soto's assessed valuation has declined -11% in the last three years. The purchasing power of

one mill has gone down -\$6,458, from \$59,329 in 2008 to \$52,870 in 2011.

Sales Taxes. With regional job losses and losses in consumer confidence, County and City sales taxes have taken a big hit. From a high of \$1,115,214 in 2008, our projected sales taxes for 2010 will have declined -15% to \$945,684.

Development Activity. Since 2008, our local development and development-related revenues have paralleled the same decline as the rest of the metro area. This results in the need to scale back capital-related projects such as road paving and water/sewer projects.

City Administrator Patrick Guilfoyle said, "In 2008, the City understood that the next few years would be difficult. We adjusted our 5-year financial forecast accordingly and have been making proactive decisions to minimize any financial difficulties and to protect our strong financial position."

For the 2011 budget, the City Council:

- Reduced our capital improvement program significantly, to a level

where we can live within our ability to pay and not over-extend ourselves. Toward that end,

- The 2011 budget contains no debt-financed capital projects.
- We downsized the scope of capital projects, basically providing funds to continue with our efforts to repave existing roads and complete some basic water-line replacements. We reduced cash commitments from a 2010 total of \$534,288 to a 2011 total of \$265,000
- Prepared preliminary financial goals and plans for 2012 to pay for the \$1.5 to \$2 million costs associated with upgrading our water utility's ability to stay in the production business. These improvements will all be on-line by spring, 2011.
- Eliminated three summer part-time positions in the Street and Parks Departments.
- Froze salary levels for 2010; there will be no salary increases. The City is going to take a wait-and-see posture for 2011.
- Kept property taxes at a level that

will produce a tax decrease for most homeowners and businesses (See the related article on property taxes for more detail.).

- Kept a lid on property taxes, 2011 increase +1/2% (+\$5,431) from 2010 total of \$1,057,260 to \$1,062,691.
- Retained current programs and services. De Soto is not looking at the need to reduce or eliminate any programs or services.
- Reduced operating-department budgets (administration, planning/engineering, inspections, parks/recreation, aquatic center, community center, streets, police services, code enforcement, court) -1% from 2010 total of \$3,340,198 to \$3,328,393.
- Reduced utility budgets (water, sewer, refuse) by -11% from 2010 total of \$2,121,919 to \$1,894,724.
- Approved an overall 2011 budget total of \$7,310,431 (+1.9% or +\$14,210 increase) over the 2010 budget of \$7,296,221.